

Vocal/Piano

DEVELOPING MUSICIANSHIP THROUGH IMPROVISATION

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1-B

Developing Musicianship through Improvisation 1-B – Vocal/Piano Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Do you know musicians who can improvise? Chances are they know a lot of tunes, and they learn new ones with relative ease. It seems that improvisers can sing and/or play anything that comes to mind. They interact in the moment to create one-of-a-kind experiences. Many accomplished musicians do not think of themselves as improvisers, yet if they have something unique to say in their performance, they are improvising. In that sense, we are all improvisers, and it is important to have opportunities throughout our lives to express ourselves creatively through improvisation.

Improvisation in music is the spontaneous expression of meaningful musical ideas; it is analogous to conversation in language. In *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation (DMTI)*, key elements of improvisation include personalization, spontaneity, anticipation, prediction, interaction, and being in the moment. In fact, we are all born improvisers, as evidenced by our behavior in early childhood. This state of mind is clearly demonstrated in children's play. When not encouraged to improvise as a part of formal music education, even the thought of improvisation may evoke fear in some students. If we let go of that fear, we find that we are improvisers. Improvisation enables musicians to express themselves from an internal source and is central to developing musicianship in all aspects of music.

The process of learning music is much the same as the process of learning language. Think for a moment about how you learned language. First you listened to language. From birth and even before, you were surrounded by the sound of language and conversation. You absorbed these sounds and became acculturated to the language. Soon you began to imitate words and phrases spoken by your parents and siblings. Before you were successful at imitating, you were praised for your efforts and encouraged to "babble" even when sounds you were making did not make complete sense to others. Eventually, you began to associate words (names) with people, things, feelings, desires,

etc., and you began to make statements and ask questions that were your own. You began to think and improvise in the language, and your interaction with parents and siblings was crucial to your language acquisition. After several years of developing your ability to think and speak, years of being surrounded by print, and years of being read to by others, you learned to read and write. You learned to read and write with understanding because of the experiences you had listening, thinking, and speaking.

Just as it is possible for everyone to learn a language and engage in meaningful conversation, it is also possible for everyone to engage in meaningful improvisation, which is at the core of the music learning process. Like conversation in language, interaction with others is crucial. In this book, you will listen to music and sing and play melodies, bass lines, and harmony parts, by ear. The objective is not to memorize—after all, you didn't memorize your speech as a child. Rather, the objective is to internalize so many melodies, bass lines, and harmony parts that you begin to hear harmonic progressions (the changes, or patterns in music) and generate your own melodic lines.

At the same time you build a repertoire of tunes and a sense of musical style, you develop an understanding of harmonic progression, harmonic rhythm, and the aural skills necessary to listen to music meaningfully and to interact expressively with others. Throughout these materials you will build a vocabulary of tonal patterns, melodic phrases, rhythm patterns, and rhythm phrases to apply in many ways. As a part of *DMTI* you will read and write music, thus connecting your improvisation to meaningful experiences with notation. The objective is to read and write music with comprehension. You will hear and understand the music documented on the page in the context of what you have created and improvised. You will also gain a greater understanding of music you hear in everyday experiences.

When reading music, it is important to remember that notation is the documentation

of a creative process. Learning to read and write music should be presented in light of that creativity. Developing your musicianship through improvisation also provides a context for reading and composing music with comprehension. When musicians express themselves by putting together their own musical thoughts in composition, they can create, develop, and reflect on musical ideas. Composers are able to “go back” or “move forward” in time as they create. This reflection and revision process is a good way to discover relationships in music, and as a result, improve your overall musicianship. The relationships among listening, improvising, reading, writing, and analyzing music is powerful. Each has the potential to

influence the other in significant ways when presented in the context of improvisation.

With the goal of improving your musicianship, each unit in *DMTI* is based on a familiar tune. Each unit contains six parts: (1) Repertoire; (2) Patterns and Progressions; (3) Improvising Melodic Phrases; (4) Learning to Improvise – Seven Skills; (5) Reading and Writing; and (6) Learning Solos.

Improving your musicianship will promote more spontaneous and meaningful music making. Regardless of your musical background, it is never too late to begin learning tunes and harmonies by ear. This process is at the heart of improvisation, and it is a unique aspect of *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation*.

DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL IMPROVISATIONS

Following are additional suggestions for continued growth as an improviser. The suggestions and the improvisation rating scale provide many ways to improve your musicianship as you acquire skills presented in *DMTI*. To get started, you may wish to practice one or two of the following concepts at a time. With experience, you will internalize these ideas and develop more meaningful improvisations.

A good place to start this process is by listening to other musicians. Become aware of how improvisers (1) personalize melodies with expressive phrasing, dynamics, and tonal and rhythmic variation; (2) are spontaneous and in the moment; (3) play with space (silence); (4) interact with each other; (5) develop motives and play anything that comes to mind; and (6) understand harmony and rhythm by ear.

DMTI will help you to develop the principles listed above and will also assist you with the following suggestions for improving your skills as an improviser: (1) Learn a repertoire of tunes and improvised solos by ear from other musicians and by listening to recordings. Building a large repertoire of tunes by ear will provide a basis for developing improvised solos; (2) Listen to improvised music like an improviser and notice the spontaneous interaction; (3) Learn harmony by ear; (4) Learn a harmonic, rhythmic, and expressive vocabulary by ear; (5) Take risks and try out new ideas; and (6) Surround yourself with others working on the same principles.

ASSESSING YOUR LEARNING

Consider the following rating scale as a means of assessment and feedback for improving your improvisation skills.

Improvisation Rating Scale

Improvisation (Additive Dimension, 0–5)

Try to include all of the following criteria in your improvisations. Circle all that apply. The improviser:

- 1 performs a variety of related ideas and reuses material in the context of the overall form (thus the performance contains elements of unity and variety).
- 1 demonstrates motivic development through tonal and rhythm sequences.
- 1 demonstrates effective use of silence.
- 1 demonstrates an understanding of tension and release through resolution of notes in the context of the harmonic progression.
- 1 embellishes notes and performs variations of themes.

Rhythm (Continuous Dimension, 0–5)

Try to (5) establish a cohesive solo rhythmically—develop rhythmic motives in the context of the overall form. As solos improve, indicate progress by circling one of the following. The improviser:

- 1 performs individual beats without a sense of the meter.
- 2 demonstrates a rhythmic feeling of the meter throughout.
- 3 employs various contrasting rhythm patterns without a sense of rhythmic motivic development.
- 4 begins to develop and relate rhythmic ideas in some phrases.
- 5 establishes a cohesive solo rhythmically—develops rhythmic motives in the context of the overall form.

Expressive (Additive Dimension, 0–5)

Try to include all of the following criteria in your improvisations. Circle all that apply. The improviser:

- 1 demonstrates a sense of musical interaction (e.g., melodic dialogue alone, or musical conversation among performers).
- 1 demonstrates an understanding of dynamics.
- 1 demonstrates an understanding of musical style and characteristic tone quality.
- 1 demonstrates a sense of appropriate articulation.
- 1 demonstrates an understanding of appropriate phrasing.

Harmonic Progression (Continuous Dimension, 0–5, Major/Minor–Tonic and Dominant)

This dimension will vary depending upon the harmonic vocabulary of the tune. Work to (5) perform all patterns in all functions correctly. As solos improve, indicate progress by circling one of the following. The improviser:

- 1 performs first and/or last note correctly.
- 2 performs some patterns in one function correctly (tonic reference).
- 3 performs all patterns in one function correctly (tonic reference).
- 4 performs all patterns in one function (tonic) correctly and some patterns in one other function correctly.
- 5 performs all patterns in tonic and dominant functions correctly.

Harmonic Progression (Continuous Dimension, 0–5, Major/Minor–Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant)

This dimension will vary depending upon the harmonic vocabulary of the tune. Work to (5) perform all patterns in all functions correctly. As solos improve, indicate progress by circling one of the following. The improviser:

- 1 performs first and/or last note correctly.
- 2 performs all patterns in one function correctly (tonic reference).
- 3 performs all patterns in one function (tonic) correctly and some patterns in one other function correctly.
- 4 performs all patterns in two functions correctly.
- 5 performs all tonic, dominant, and subdominant patterns (functions) correctly.

Harmonic Progression (Continuous Dimension, 0–5, Tonic, Supertonic, Mediant, Subdominant, Diminished, Dominant, Submediant, and Applied Dominant)

This dimension will vary depending upon the harmonic vocabulary of the tune. Try to perform all patterns in all functions correctly. As solos improve, indicate progress by circling one of the following. The improviser:

- 1 performs first and/or last note correctly.
- 2 performs all patterns in one function correctly (tonic reference).
- 3 performs all patterns in two functions correctly.
- 4 performs all patterns in three or more functions correctly (Specifically: _____).
- 5 performs all patterns in all functions correctly.

RHYTHM SYLLABLES AND SOLFÈGE

While you are building a repertoire of songs and a sense of musical style and harmonic progression, you will also be building a vocabulary of solfège (tonal syllables), rhythm syllables, and names for the tonalities, meters, and functions in the melodies you are singing and playing. Syllables help you to organize musical thoughts so that you can increase your comprehension and make musical inferences. The names of the meters, tonalities, and functions provide a means for you to organize music by ear—a kind of aural classification system. For example, in duple and triple meters you learn large beat (macrobeat) and small beat (microbeat) rhythm

functions; in major and minor tonalities you learn tonic and dominant harmonic functions. These tools help you group notes into patterns, patterns into phrases, and phrases into the overall form of the music. In this context, you will begin to improvise more meaningfully. Solfège and rhythm syllables are also useful tools in making the connection from the ear to notation—the symbols of music—both when reading and composing.

Remember, when learning syllables, always perform them. Sing the solfège and chant the rhythm syllables rather than say them.

RHYTHM SYLLABLES

Unit 1 – “Greensleeves”

Meter: Triple

Syllables: ♩ = DU; ♪♪ = DU DA DI; ♪♪♪ = DU TA DA TA DI TA

① $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DU DI DU TA DI DU DI DU TA DI

② $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DI DU TA DI DU DI DU

③ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU TA DI DU TA DI DU DI DU

④ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DU TA DI DU DI DU TA DI

⑤ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DU DU DI DU

⑥ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DU DI DU TA DI DU DA DI

⑦ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DA DI DU TA DI DU DU

⑧ $\frac{3}{8}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
DU DU DI DU DI DU

Unit 2 – “My Country ’tis of Thee”

“God Save the Queen”

Meter: Triple

Syllables: ♩ = DU; ♪♪♪ = DU DA DI; ♪♪♪♪ = DU TA DA TA DI TA

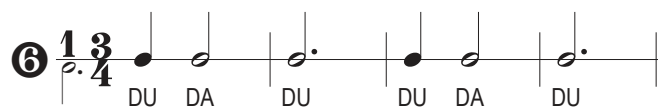
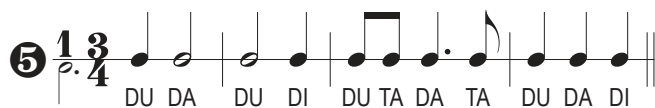
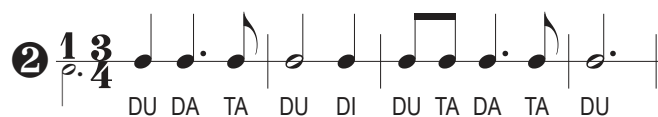
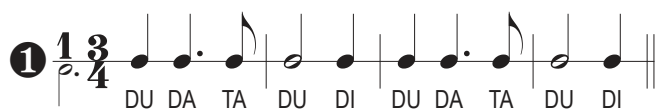


Unit 3 – “La Folia”

Unit 4 – “Rule of the Octave”

Meter: Triple

Syllables: ♩ = DU; ♪♪♪ = DU DA DI; ♪♪♪♪ = DU TA DA TA DI TA



SOLFÈGE

Octave adjustments may be necessary.

Unit 1 – “Greensleeves”

Classification: Minor – Tonic, Subtonic, Dominant, Mediant

Passamezzo antico; Romanesca

D = LA; F = DO

Syllables:

Chords: Dm, C, Dm, A, Dm, F, C, Dm, A, F, C, Dm, A, Dm

Syllables:
 LA DO MI RE TI SO LA DO LA TI SI MI LA MI LA DO MI DO RE TI RE
 DO MI LA TI SI MI MI SO DO TI RE SO MI DO LA TI SI TI LA MI LA

Unit 2 – “My Country ’tis of Thee”

“God Save the Queen”

Classification: Major – I, vi, ii⁶, V, V⁷, I₄⁶, vii^{o7}/vi, V₄⁶, IV

F = DO

Syllables:

Chords: F, Dm, Gm/Bb, C, F, Dm, Gm/Bb, F/C, C#°7, Dm, Gm/Bb, F/C, C, F

Syllables:
 DO MI DO DO MI LA FA LA RE TI RE SO MI SO MI DO MI LA DO FA LA RE
 MI DO SO SI FA RE TI LA DO MI RE LA FA SO MI DO SO RE TI DO SO DO

Unit 3 – “La Folia”

Classification: Minor – Tonic, Dominant, Subdominant, Diminished, Subtonic, Mediant

D = LA

Syllables:

LA DO MI MI SI TI DO MI LA DO LA FI SO TI RE DO MI DO TI SO RE

TI SI MI DO MI LA LA RE FA RE FA RE MI TI LA SI TI MI MI DO LA

Unit 4 – “Rule of the Octave”

Classification: Major – I, I⁶, ii⁶, IV⁶, V, V⁶, V⁶₅, V⁴₃, V⁴₂, V⁴₃/V

C = DO

Syllables:

ASCENDING

DO MI DO RE TI RE DO MI SO LA FA RE DO RE TI SO

DESCENDING

FA LA FA DO TI RE SO SO MI DO MI SO DO TI RE SO FI LA RE DO

TI RE SO SO FA RE MI SO DO RE FA SO TI DO SO MI DO

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SCOPE AND SEQUENCE INFORMATION

Each unit in *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation* is based on a familiar tune. The following table includes a summary of each volume’s content and suggestions for other possible repertoire.

Book 1

Repertoire	Rhythm Patterns & Rhythm Phrases	Tonal Patterns & Harmonic Progressions	Suggested Repertoire *
1. Long, Long Ago	Duple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE	Major: Tonic and Dominant	Folk and classical style tunes with tonic and dominant harmony in major and minor, and fundamental duple and triple rhythms; canons
2. Mary Ann	Duple Meter (Latin): ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE; ♩♩♩ = DU TA DE TA	Major: Tonic and Dominant	Folk, Latin, and popular tunes with tonic and dominant harmony in major and minor, fundamental duple and triple rhythms, and syncopation; canons
3. Joshua	Duple Meter (Swing): ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE; ♩♩♩ = DU DI DE DI	Minor: Tonic and Dominant	Spirituals, folk, and jazz tunes with tonic and dominant harmony in major and minor, fundamental duple and triple rhythms, and syncopation
4. Simple Gifts	Duple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE; ♩♩♩ = DU TA DE TA	Major: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant	Folk and classical style tunes with tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmony in major and minor, and fundamental duple and triple rhythms
5. Down by the Riverside	Duple Meter (Swing): ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE; ♩♩♩ = DU DI DE DI	Major: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant	Folk, jazz, and popular tunes with tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmony in major and minor, and fundamental duple and triple rhythms, and syncopation

Book 1-B

Repertoire	Rhythm Patterns & Rhythm Phrases	Tonal Patterns & Harmonic Progressions	Suggested Repertoire
1. Greensleeves	Triple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI	Minor: Tonic, Subtonic, Dominant, Mediant Passamezzo antico Romanesca	Folk, classical, jazz, and popular tunes with similar rhythm patterns and harmonic progressions Bach Chorales
2. My Country 'tis of Thee	Triple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI	Major: I, vi, ii ⁶ , V, V ⁷ , I ₄ ⁶ , vii ^{o7} /vi, V ₄ ⁶ , IV	
3. La Folia	Triple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI	Minor: Tonic, Dominant, Subdominant, Diminished, Subtonic, Mediant	
4. Rule of the Octave	Triple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI	Major: I, I ₄ ⁶ , ii ₃ ⁶ , IV ⁶ , V, V ⁶ , V ₃ ⁶ , V ₃ ⁴ , V ₂ ⁴ , V ₃ ⁴ /V	

Book 2

Repertoire	Rhythm Patterns & Rhythm Phrases	Tonal Patterns & Harmonic Progressions	Suggested Repertoire **
1. When the Saints Go Marching In	Duple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE	Major: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant	Folk, jazz, and popular tunes with tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmony in major and minor, and fundamental duple and triple rhythms
2. Amazing Grace	Triple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI; ♩♩ ♩♩ ♩ = DU TA DA TA DI TA	Major: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant	Spirituals, folk, classical, and jazz tunes with tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmony in major and minor, fundamental duple and triple rhythms
3. Motherless Child	Duple Meter: ♩ = DU; ♪ = DU DE; ♩♩♩ = DU TA DE TA; ♩♩♩ = DU DI; ♩♩♩ = DU DA DI	Minor: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant	Spirituals, folk, classical, and jazz tunes with tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmony in major and minor, fundamental duple and triple rhythms, and syncopation

* Possible tunes to learn include “Ach Du Leiber Augustine,” “Alouette,” “Camptown Races,” “Down In The Valley,” “Endearing Young Charms,” “Five Cents Have I,” “Irish Washerwomen,” “Jolly Miller,” “Oh Susanna,” “Tinga Layo”

** Possible tunes to learn include: “A La Nanita Nana,” “Erie Canal,” “Jamaican Farewell,” “Little Brown Jug,” “Minuet,” “Swing Low Sweet Chariot,” “This Old Hammer,” “You Are My Sunshine”

Book 3

Repertoire	Rhythm Patterns & Rhythm Phrases	Tonal Patterns & Harmonic Progressions	Suggested Repertoire
1. Saint Louis Blues	Duple Meter (Swing): ♩ = DU; ♪ ♪ = DU DE; ♩ ♩ ♩ = DU DI DE DI	Blues – Major: Tonic, Subdominant, and Dominant. Also, Supertonic and V7/ii	Various Blues Tunes
2. Transformation	Duple Meter (Swing): ♩ = DU; ♪ ♪ = DU DE; ♩ ♩ ♩ = DU DI DE DI	Major – Tonic, Supertonic, Mediant, Subdominant, Dominant, Submediant, Diminished, Cadential $\frac{6}{4}$, V7/ii, V7/IV, V7/V, and V7/vi	“I Got Rhythm,” “Anthropology,” “Oleo,” and various jazz standards
3. Red Wings	Duple Meter (Swing): ♩ = DU; ♪ ♪ = DU DE; ♩ ♩ ♩ = DU DI DE DI	Major: Tonic, Supertonic, Mediant Half Diminished, Dominant, Diminished, Subtonic, and V7/ii	“Bye, Bye Blackbird,” various jazz standards; tunes from composers e.g., Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter, Richard Rogers; Bach Chorales